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ABSTRACT

First-year assistant principals are commonly faced with problems that they are not prepared for, including dealing with socialization to a new work environment, tension between administrators and teachers, resolving conflict, and learning how to be in a secondary leadership position. Sometimes they quit or request to change jobs. A professional development cadre is one possible solution for easing the transition for new assistant principals. One such cadre was developed and studied to assess how its implementation impacted the socio-emotional transition into an administrative role and how it affected their skill levels. Surveys of candidates showed that first-year assistant principals struggled the most with their general job responsibilities. Many were surprised at how little they knew about many of the job tasks. Notable were negative impacts of the job on families, physical health, social life, and mental well-being. The cadres helped the new assistant principals by providing structured time for them to talk to one another and by giving them the opportunity to do individual reflection. Small-group discussions were also of positive significance. Skills were affected positively, though not consistently in all areas of evaluation. (Contains 11 references.) (RT)

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The Effects of a Professional Development Cadre on New Assistant Principals

EERA

Sarasota, 2002

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Educational Significance

Increased demands for improvements in education have had a major effect on the field of educational administration. It makes sense to assume that one cannot have an excellent school without excellent leaders (National Commission for the Principalship, 1990).

In addition to the emphasis on educational reform, there is much attention being given to finding and retaining good administrators. Nationwide there is a shortage of qualified candidates for openings in the principalship (NAESP, 1998). Increased difficulty and perceived undesirability of the job have been identified as factors that can lead to administrator turnover or shortages (Evans, 1995).

First year administrators are faced with additional problems. In many situations, new administrators are poorly trained to assume their new roles (Michel, 1996). Gary Hartzell (1994) describes several challenges for the first year assistant principal. The first year assistant principal must deal with socialization to a new work environment, the interactive atmosphere of the administrative office, the tension between teachers and administrators, learning the school organization, defining their own role in the organization, resolving conflict, and learning how to be in a secondary leadership position.

A new administrator who becomes overwhelmed and frustrated may quit or request to change jobs. A school district wants to avoid losing a valuable administrator or employee, especially during a time of nationwide shortages. A professional development cadre is one possible solution for easing the transition for new administrators.

Theoretical Perspective

Innovations in professional development programs for new administrators are one possible way for addressing the increased concern for improvements in education and for retaining good leaders. According to the literature, first year administrators need time to talk with other administrators (Michel, 1996; Hartzell, 1994; Educational Research Service, 1999; Marnik, 1997; Regules, 1997; and Goodson, 2000). The Educational Research Service (1999) suggests peer study groups and/or support networks where administrators meet regularly to build knowledge, share concerns, and bond with one another. George Marnik in his article on professional development of school leaders says that:

> Relationships with colleagues were critical as a form of professional development and a means of support and feedback on the behavioral changes they worked to incorporate in practice (Marnik, 1999, p. 1166).

In addition to networking and informal sharing with colleagues, new administrators need workshops that provide knowledge relevant to their new job (Michel, 1996; Hartzell, 1994; Educational Research Service, 1999; Regules, 1997; and Goodson, 2000). According to the Educational Research Service,

> Hands-on practice in real situations provides essential reinforcement for theory (Educational Research Service, 1999, p. 3).

Hartzell (1994) and Goodson (2000) suggest that new administrators be trained in knowing where to get help (resources), problem solving, and conflict resolution.

New administrators also need opportunities to reflect – time to be thoughtful, plan, and analyze the implications of a plan. According to the Educational Research Service, reflection occurs only when time is set-aside for it. One effective tool for reflection is the

keeping of a journal. A journal can help an individual reflect about his/her job and bring greater insights in solving problems (Educational Research Service, 1999).

Research Context

It is within this context that the Professional Development Cadre for New Assistant Principals was developed. The cadre was a peer support group for beginning administrators. The group consisted of 25 new administrators who were hired in Pinellas County, Florida between December of 1999 and December of 2000. The principal investigator who was a professor and had administrative experience led the cadre. The cadre met regularly, once a month for 11 months from August of 2000 through June of 2001. During the meetings, the agenda was as follows: informal discussion time, journal writing, structured small group discussions about journal topic, large group discussion about journal topic, professional development presentations, and pluses and deltas from participants about the session. Training areas for the professional development presentations included: accessing resources, student discipline issues, conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, appraisal, leading people, listening skills, school improvement planning, and technology skills. Guest speakers from Pinellas County School District conducted the professional development presentations.

The principal investigator designed a project to determine the effects of the Professional Development Cadre for New Assistant Principals. She wanted to know:

> How does the implementation of the professional development cadre for new assistant principals impact the socio-emotional transition into an administrative role?

How does the implementation of the professional development cadre for new assistant principals effect the skill levels of new assistant principals?

Research Design

The research design was case study research. The unit of analysis was the cadre as a single group.

There were several data sources: journal entries, highlights of small group discussions recorded on chart paper, workshop customer satisfaction feedback, pre- and post self evaluation of performance on Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principal Performance Appraisal, and pre- and post self evaluation of performance on Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills.

Cadre participants were given a composition notebook that served as a journal. At each monthly meeting, the principal investigator provided a new journal topic that participants wrote about in their journals. This same journal topic was used to spur discussion in small groups of four or five participants. Group ideas were recorded on chart paper and then discussed as a large group.

Cadre participants were asked for feedback on workshop satisfaction at the end of each meeting. Comments were recorded on chart paper for the group. In June of 2001, participants completed a Workshop Satisfaction Feedback Form to give feedback on the cadre for the year.

The principal investigator used the Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principal Performance Appraisal. There were seven areas on the appraisal form: leadership, information and analysis, strategic quality planning, customer focus, human resources,

management of processes, and operational results. Cadre participants conducted a self-assessment using this instrument in August of 2000 and again in June of 2001.

The principal investigator developed the Self-Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Instrument. It consisted of 53 objectives that measured cadre participants' knowledge and skills competency levels in relation to the ten training topics (accessing resources, student discipline issues, conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, appraisal, walk-throughs, leading people, listening skills, school improvement planning, and technology skills). Cadre participants conducted a self-assessment using this instrument in August of 2000 and then again in June of 2001.

Data Analysis

Journal entries, highlights of small group discussions, and workshop customer satisfaction feedback were analyzed using a general analytical strategy as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994) in their text, Qualitative Data Analysis:

Step 1. Underline key terms in text.
Step 2. Restate key phrases.
Step 3. Reduce the phrases and create clusters.
Step 4. Reduction of clusters and attaching labels.
Step 5. Generalizations about the phrases in each cluster.
Step 6. Generating mini-theories.
Step 7. Integrating theories in an explanatory framework.

After each data source was analyzed, a matrix of categories was created, and evidence was placed within such categories. Frequencies across categories were recorded.

The pre- and post self evaluation of performance on Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principal Performance Appraisal had a three part scale: not attained, effective, or highly effective. Participants rated themselves using this scale. Changes between pre- and post self-evaluation of their skills were recorded and summarized.

The pre- and post self-evaluation of performance on Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills was analyzed using independent T-tests. Using Bonferroni controlled the family wise error rate. A probably of .05 was used to determine statistical significance.

WORKSHOP CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Nineteen of the 25 participants completed a Workshop Customer Satisfaction Survey on May 9th, 2001. Overall participant responses were favorable. Of the participants surveyed, 95% strongly agreed that the professional development cadre objectives had been identified, that an effective process was used to address questions, that the cadre was well-organized and managed, and that overall the cadre's objectives were achieved. On the same survey, at least 89% of the participants surveyed strongly agreed that the professional development presentations were presented in an effective and interesting way and that the training built skills to help achieve school, department, or personal goals. Complete results are given in the table below.

Table 1 Results of Workshop Customer Satisfaction Survey

Linkages	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
3.0	District strategic direction and goals were clearly communicated	0	0
2.0	Workshop objectives/outcomes identified	0	0
6.0	Examples and activities supported the workshop objectives/outcomes	0	0
5.0	Materials/Handouts reinforced workshop objectives/outcomes	0	0
6.0	An effective process was used to address questions	0	0
6.0	Workshop was well-organized and effectively managed	0	0
5.0	Effective presentation skills made the workshop interesting	0	0
5.0	Time allotment for the workshop was appropriate	0	0
5.0	Training has built skills to help achieve school, department, or personal goals	0	0
1.0	Presenter used strategies to actively involve participants in the learning	0	0
7.0	Overall this workshop's training objectives/outcomes were achieved	0	0

Similarly on an open-ended portion of the survey, participants were asked, "What do you feel were the strongest features of the workshop?" Approximately half of the participants stated that the wide variety of topics covered by the professional development presentations and having the time to talk with other new assistant principals were the strongest features. Sixteen percent stated that journal writing or having the time to reflect was critical.

On the survey, participants were also asked, "How did you apply information from the workshop?" The response given most often by participants was that each session included portions that could be applied immediately. Participants mentioned the session on student discipline more than any other training topic.

When asked for additional comments, several participants expressed gratitude and hoped that the training would continue for other new assistant principals. Many said that the cadre made their year bearable. One participant said:

> I looked forward to the monthly meetings and will miss the opportunity to share thoughts, ideas, and concerns.

Another participant said:

> Vital – must continue for other new assistant principals; information and networking were fantastic!

Other participants complemented the leader. Participants said:

> The leader was knowledgeable with down to earth common sense help. I liked her personality.
>
> The leader truly cares about our support and progress.
>
> Thanks for a great experience! The leader was great – very realistic and positive.

SELF ASSESSMENT PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Sixteen of the participants conducted a self evaluation using the Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principal Performance Appraisal form in August of 2000 and then again in June of 2001. Changes between pre- and post self-evaluation of their skills were recorded and summarized in Table 2 below. In the table, N refers to not attained. E means effectively attained, and H means highly attained. The numbers denote the degree of change from not attained to effective to highly attained. The positive or negative sign signifies the direction of the change.

Table 2 Pre and Post Assessment Data on Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principal Performance Appraisal

PARTICIPANT	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8			9			10		
LEADERSHIP	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	H	H	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	N	E	+1	E	E	0	E	H	+1	H	H	0
INFO & ANALYSIS	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	N	N	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	H	H	0
QUALITY PLANNING	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1	E	E	0	N	E	+1	N	N	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1
CUSTOMER FOCUS	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1
HUMAN RESOURCES	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1	E	E	0	N	H	+2	E	E	0	E	H	+1	H	H	0	E	H	+1
MANAGEMENT OF PROCESSES	N	E	+1	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	N	E	+1	N	N	0	E	H	+1	E	H	+1	E	H	+1
OPERATIONAL RESULTS	N	N	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	N	N	0	E	E	0	N	E	+1	E	H	+1	E	?	?	E	E	0	H	H	0

PARTICIPANT	11			12			13			14			15			16			Total											
LEADERSHIP	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	E	0	E	H	+1			+7										
INFO & ANALYSIS	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	N	H	+2	E	E	0	E	E	0			+2										
QUALITY PLANNING	E	E	0	N	E	+1	E	E	0	N	H	+2	E	E	0	?	H	?			+8										
CUSTOMER FOCUS	E	E	0	E	H	+1	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	H	H	0			+8										
HUMAN RESOURCES	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	H	+1	I	H	+2	E	H	+1			+10										
MANAGEMENT OF PROCESSES	E	E	0	E	E	0	E	E	0	N	H	+2	N	E	+1	E	H	+1			+9										
OPERATIONAL RESULTS	E	E	0	E	H	+1	N	E	+1	N	H	+2	N	H	+2	E	H	+1			+10										

Across participants, there was a positive change towards improvement in all seven areas. The greatest change occurred in two areas, human resources and operational results, while change happened the least in the area of information & analysis. Given below are some of the criteria used to measure human resources, operational results, and information & analysis on the Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principals Performance Appraisal form:

Human Resources – plan training, build school community, use team approach, contribute to positive staff morale, deal appropriately with personnel issues, and assess the developmental needs of self and others.

Operational Results – maintain result measurements over time for student achievement, employee well being, and safe learning environment.

Information & Analysis – assist in collecting and maintaining data to monitor goals, analyze and use data for decisions, makes data accessible to all stakeholders.

For each participant, there was no consistent pattern of change across skill areas. Five participants showed no change or only one movement to positive change across all areas. Seven participants showed two to four movements to positive change across all areas. Four participants showed an average of seven movements to positive change with one participant showing ten movements. These differences can be attributed to the level of skills that each participant had going into their new job as an assistant principal, to the amount of skills attained on the job during their first year, and to what they gained from professional development sessions including but not limited to the cadre.

SELF ASSESSMENT ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS INSTRUMENT

Twenty-one of the participants conducted a self-evaluation using the Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Instrument in August of 2000 and then again in June of 2001. The instrument was directly correlated with the professional development presentations. Participants rated their knowledge in relation to each item using the following scale:

Not a clue = 1
I have heard of this = 2
I know enough to wing it = 3
I am competent and confident = 4
I could teach this to others = 5

Changes between pre- and post self-evaluation of their skills were recorded and summarized in Tables 3-12 below. A probably rate of .05 was used to determine statistical significance.

Table 3 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Accessing Resources – Items 1 through 4

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
1	Pre	2.476	0.602	0.000
	Post	3.381	0.498	0.000
2	Pre	2.810	0.750	0.002
	Post	3.524	0.680	0.002
3	Pre	3.048	0.921	0.149
	Post	3.429	0.746	0.149
4	Pre	1.952	0.973	0.004
	Post	2.952	1.117	0.004

For items one through four that related to the participants' abilities to access resources, the means between pre and post were significantly different for three of the four questions. Item 3 that asked participants about their knowledge of the Pinellas County Policy Handbook did not change significantly.

Table 4 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Discipline Issues – Items 5 through 20

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
5	Pre	3.238	0.944	0.000
	Post	4.190	0.402	0.000
6	Pre	3.000	1.000	0.000
	Post	4.048	0.590	0.000
7	Pre	2.952	0.921	0.001
	Post	3.857	0.573	0.001
8	Pre	3.000	1.000	0.000
	Post	4.048	0.498	0.000
9	Pre	3.000	0.949	0.000
	Post	4.048	0.384	0.000
10	Pre	3.143	0.854	0.001
	Post	3.905	0.539	0.001
11	Pre	2.952	0.921	0.001
	Post	3.905	0.700	0.001
12	Pre	3.000	0.775	0.000
	Post	4.238	0.539	0.000
13	Pre	3.286	0.784	0.000
	Post	4.095	0.436	0.000
14	Pre	2.905	0.831	0.000
	Post	3.905	0.436	0.000
15	Pre	2.762	0.995	0.000
	Post	3.905	0.539	0.000
16	Pre	3.333	1.017	0.002
	Post	4.238	0.700	0.002
17	Pre	2.524	0.981	0.000
	Post	3.762	0.995	0.000
18	Pre	2.381	1.117	0.001
	Post	3.429	0.746	0.001
19	Pre	3.286	0.902	0.003
	Post	4.048	0.590	0.003
20	Pre	2.048	0.921	0.000
	Post	3.746	0.750	0.000

For items five through twenty that related to the participants' abilities to demonstrate knowledge of student discipline issues, the means between pre and post were significantly different for all sixteen items. The items that had the greatest difference in means were items 12, 17, and 20. Item 12 asked participants about their knowledge of the Office of Professional Standards. Item 17 referred to the process and paperwork for reassignment, while Item 20 related to the DOE Environmental Safety Report.

Table 5 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills
Conflict Resolution – Items 21 through 23

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
21	Pre	3.048	0.865	0.000
	Post	4.000	0.548	0.000
22	Pre	3.381	0.921	0.004
	Post	4.095	0.539	0.004
23	Pre	3.143	0.727	0.001
	Post	3.905	0.700	0.001

For items 21 through 23 that related to the participants' abilities to demonstrate knowledge regarding conflict resolution, the means between pre and post were significantly different for all three items. Item 22 showed that greatest difference in the means. The item asked participants about their knowledge of communication techniques to diffuse situations.

Table 6 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills
Cultural Sensitivity Items 24 and 25

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
24	Pre	2.381	0.805	0.000
	Post	3.571	0.598	0.000
25	Pre	2.905	0.995	0.004
	Post	3.714	0.664	0.004

Both items that related to the participants' abilities to demonstrate knowledge regarding cultural sensitivity had means that were significantly different in pre and post. Item 24 checked the level of understanding regarding the district's goals for multicultural education, while Item 24 asked about the characteristics of a multicultural school or classroom.

Table 7 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Appraisals Items 26 through 28

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
26	Pre	3.333	0.796	0.001
	Post	4.095	0.625	0.001
27	Pre	3.238	1.091	0.010
	Post	4.048	0.805	0.010
28	Pre	3.095	1.136	0.002
	Post	4.048	0.660	0.002

For items 26 through 28 that related to the participants' abilities to demonstrate knowledge regarding employee performance appraisals, the means between pre and post were significantly different for all three items. The greatest mean difference occurred with item 28 that asked participants the difference between the evaluation process and "pay for performance" in order to support the district's strategic direction.

In regards to walkthroughs, leading people, and listening skills, the means between pre and post were significantly different for all of the items. See tables 8, 9, and 10 below.

Table 8 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Walkthroughs Items 29 through 31

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
29	Pre	2.905	0.944	0.000
	Post	4.143	0.573	0.000
30	Pre	2.571	0.978	0.000
	Post	4.095	0.625	0.000
31	Pre	2.381	0.921	0.000
	Post	4.050	0.605	0.000

Table 9 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Leading People Items 32-36

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
32	Pre	3.476	0.512	0.000
	Post	4.050	0.224	0.000
33	Pre	3.381	0.590	0.001
	Post	4.000	0.459	0.001
34	Pre	3.571	0.598	0.014
	Post	4.000	0.459	0.014
35	Pre	3.524	0.602	0.011
	Pre	3.950	0.394	0.011
36	Pre	3.333	0.447	0.005
	Post	3.900	0.447	0.000

Table 10 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Listening Skills Items 37 through 40

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
37	Pre	3.524	0.814	0.005
	Post	4.150	0.489	0.005
38	Pre	2.524	1.209	0.000
	Post	4.050	0.510	0.000
39	Pre	3.667	0.796	0.011
	Post	4.200	0.410	0.011
40	Pre	3.381	0.865	0.001
	Pre	4.150	0.366	0.001

The weakest areas of the survey were school improvement planning and technology. Both showed very little change between pre and post. Only one item per area had means between pre and post that were significantly different (*).

Table 11 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills
School Improvement Planning Items 41 through 45

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
41	Pre	3.952	0.740	0.646
	Post	4.050	0.605	0.646
42	Pre	3.333	1.111	0.050
	Post	3.950	0.826	0.050
43	Pre	3.810	0.814	0.170
	Post	4.150	0.745	0.170
44*	Pre	3.524	0.680	0.279
	Post	3.750	0.639	0.279
45	Pre	3.714	0.956	0.287
	Post	4.000	0.725	0.287

Table 12 Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills
Technology Items 46 through 53

Item	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Probability
46	Pre	4.429	0.598	0.683
	Post	4.500	0.513	0.683
47	Pre	4.190	0.680	0.774
	Post	4.250	0.639	0.774
48	Pre	3.857	1.014	0.281
	Post	4.150	0.671	0.281
49	Pre	3.667	1.197	0.496
	Post	3.900	0.968	0.496
50	Pre	3.857	1.062	0.896
	Post	3.900	1.021	0.896
51	Pre	3.850	1.137	0.448
	Post	4.100	0.912	0.448
52*	Pre	2.800	1.105	0.027
	Post	3.600	1.095	0.027
53	Pre	3.300	1.129	0.205
	Post	3.700	0.801	0.205

After studying the data, two major findings were discovered. First, eight of the areas showed change in a positive direction in regards to learning.

Second, there was an effect where participants were noncommittal and tended to choose middle options versus committing to extremes. This may be one possible explanation for the lack of change in the two areas of school improvement planning and technology. In the post, participants may have been reluctant to move from option four to option five. On the other hand, it is possible that the professional development presentations were lacking for those two areas. One last possibility is that participants may have had greater knowledge of these two areas prior to training, thus there may have been a ceiling effect.

JOURNALS

Cadre participants were given a composition notebook that served as a journal. At each cadre meeting, participants were given a journal writing cue and asked to record thoughts in his/her journal. The following is a list of the journal topics used:

Meeting	1	August	Best thing and worst thing that happened to you at work this week.
	2	September	The thing that has surprise me most about my job thus far.
	3	October	The most challenging thing about your job.
	4	November	Describe how your perception of teachers has changed now that you are in an administrative role.
	5	January	Describe how your perception of parents has changed that you are in an administrative role.
	6	February	How has my new role/job affected my personal life?
	7	March	Describe your relationship with your principal.

8	April	How has your perception of the role or job of an assistant principal changed?
9	May	Would I return to the classroom now – why or why not?

The average attendance of participants across meetings was 81%. The journals of the 25 participants were analyzed by rephrasing their comments into short sentences or clusters and then these clusters were organized into categories with labels. When more than one participant said basically the same thing, a number in parenthesis follows the statement. Complete journal data is given below. It is described in terms of challenges, positives, and neutrals as described by the participants.

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Challenges

A) Transition from classroom to own office

Equipment and Materials
Learning to use Mac instead of IBM (2).
Cleaning out old teaching files.
Arranging new office.
Need a personal printer.
Need a computer.
Restroom across from my new office does not drain well and smells bad.

Emotional Issues
I have to be the disciplinarian with the students (2).
No one introduced me or walked me around the school.
Conflict from day one – I was put into the guidance counselor's office and got her extended duty days.
This person (another a.p.) has been very unhappy and is leaving. She made my transition stressful.
I have had feelings of being insignificant.
I found out that my work hours will be 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Procedural
I am having to adjust to working in an office that is disorganized. My classroom was well run.
I moved from a high school to a middle school and am having to learn a lot.

B) Job Responsibilities

General
Can't finish tasks (24) (priorities, time management, moment to moment interruptions, attention demanding situations, I feel disorganized or not caught up).
Multi-tasking – busy – juggling act (6)- try to meet responsibilities and assigned tasks as well as deal with the spur of the moment crisis.
The unexpected or unknown.
I'm surprised by how little I knew about the job – like doing evaluations – opening day procedures, curriculum (5).
I am still figuring out my job – on the job (5).
My duties are not clear – things are thrown to me at the last minute (3).
Amount of paperwork (2).
Number of mundane and unchallenging tasks that I do all day (2) – like lunch duty.

Specific responsibilities
Filling vacant positions (2).

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Managing the FCAT was awful.
Responsible for buses by myself for 20 minutes in the mornings.
Dealing with adults
Handling student and parent complaints about teachers (2).
Parent phone call – complaining about bus asst.
Leading adults.
Dealing with adult employees – settling disputes.
Satisfying the teachers.
Lack of policies and procedures – staff do what they want.
Lack of progression and follow through on part of teachers.

Resources
Lack of district support (3) (texts, staff development, policies don't apply too post secondary center).
Beginning new documents on computer from scratch.
Lack of funding meant we were not able to have a promised position.

Emotional Issues
Maintaining emotional teflon (3).
Decisions take time – consensus, research and yet can be overturned (3).
Be all things to all people (2).
Can't change what people think or do all the time.
My hands are tied in some disciplinarian issues with kids – I just can't "get rid of them." Especially ESE kids.
Spinning my wheels solving problems and issues that should never come up instead of improving things.

C) Effects on Personal Life

Family
Time demands difficult with family – have to rely on others (5) – spread self thin, older kids are having to care for younger ones.
Strain with spouse (5) – duties, night activities, confidentiality of situations, tasks fall on husband.
I have to travel great distances – I worry about being able to get home for my wife who is ill.
Close to destroying my personal life.

Self
Balancing work with personal time tough (3).
Barely keeping afloat – need more hours in the day.
Thinking about work when I'm at home (2).

Home
Minor chores have shifted to the weekend.

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Physical Health
No time for exercise.
I have gained 40 pounds.
I am very tired and just want to sleep when I get home.
I am not as relaxed as I used to be.

Social
No life.
I am not available much to be with my friends.
Have to watch behavior and attitudes in public – be more cautious and aware than before.

Work
More time at school (6).
School evening activities are demanding (3).

D) Staff

Negative attributes
Teachers are self centered – don't see the big picture (7).
Low performing teachers (4).
Teachers play games to get what they want/manipulative (3).
Teachers don't deal with the petty things and send them to me (3).
Some teachers complain about everything (2).
Adults are not working together as a team.
How the negativity of a few vocal staff affects overall morale (2).
Teachers need constant affirmation that they are doing their best (2).
Some are unprofessional (2).
Lack of cooperation and apathetic.
Lack withitness in regards to classroom management.
Teachers who yell the loudest get the most attention.
Teachers harder to deal with than kids.
Teachers are tight lipped about what they are doing.
Some are more interested in being liked than respected by their students.
Staff reactions to administrative decisions.

Staff Expectations
Difficult to support some teachers (3).
Staff expects that you can solve all of the institution's problems.
I now have to put out their fires.
Such a wide variety of personalities – yet most of them want something from me and want it now.

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

E) Students

ESE students are high maintenance – discipline is overwhelming (2).
Children's sad backgrounds – homeless, parentless, clotheless.
Students who yell the loudest get the most attention.
Students act the way that they do because of how they were brought up at home.

F) Parents

Parents defend their child to the max (4).
I deal with many more parents (3).
Parents think that administration is the enemy – they need to know that I have their child's educational interest in mind (2).
Parents enable their child's problems and are easily manipulated by their child (2).
Parents are manipulative – especially in regards to ESE issues
Difficulty in contacting parents.
I'm not used to being yelled out by parents – the depth of their irrationality.
It's difficult for them to be objective when it comes to their own offspring.

G) Relationship with principal

My principal checks on me too much.
My principal has difficulty letting go.
We have a strained relationship. I don't agree with his decisions. He does not support me but supports the other assistant principal.
We have different priorities.
I have a see-saw relationship with my principal.
She tends to gossip and make negative comments about people behind closed doors.
She does not support me.

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Positives

A) Transition from classroom to own office

Equipment and Materials

I was excited to arrange my office the way that I wanted it.

Emotional Issues
Welcoming office staff and principal (7). It felt like I had won the lottery – they gave me flowers and hugs.
Especially nice custodial staff.
I've returned with a renewed spirit and greater sense of direction.

Procedural
I've become more organized.
I have learned to delegate.
Days fly by.
I was able to get 1600 lockers and new combinations entered into a database for faster teacher and student distribution.
I had the opportunity to connect the email systems at two school sites so staff can communicate between sites.

B) Effects on Personal Life

Family
My kids just left home for college and my husband is a new a.p. too so this new role came at a good time for me.
I'm ok because my husband travels a lot (100 days a year) and is currently living in another state until our house there sells. We have no children.
I am determined to be a mother first and have a job second. I use a nanny, rely on my ex-husband, and have a lap top so that I can do work after my child goes to bed.

Self
I'm ok because I am alone anyhow (2).
I have no regrets because I want to do a good job and make a difference.
My confidence and determination have increased.
I've learned to use listening and empathy with my family as well as with my coworkers.
I have learned to be more tolerant and patient.
I am able to leave work at work.

Home
I've become more organized at home (2)

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Financial
I spend less of my own money on work things – no longer spend my own money on classroom materials.

C) Staff

Staff are supportive (5).
Teachers do their best even though they are overworked, underpaid, and not appreciated (3).
Teachers are leaders (2).
I respect teachers and continue to support them (2).
Great morale of the staff.
Some teachers help make changes and improvements.
Many teachers genuinely strive to enhance each and every child's education.
Have so much knowledge in their subject area.

D) Students

Students adhere to expectations quickly – like change in cafeteria procedures.

E) Parents

Most parents want what is best for their kids (2).
Parents ask me for help more now than they did when I was a teacher (2).
Parents are more supportive than when I was a teacher (2).
Most parents want to be our partners and we should treat them that way.

F) Relationship with principal

My principal is my role model (7).
Principal is confident about my decisions (6).
I am in a partnership with my principal (5).
Nurturing principal – took the time to talk with me (5)- open.
My principal is wonderful (4).
We have a respectful, teamlike friendship (4)
I actually assist my principal (3).
We have a great relationship – we are on the same page (2).
Principal empowers the teachers.
I love working for a woman.
I admire how my brand new principal started the school year.

G) Other assisant principals

My co-assistant principals are helpful and enjoyable (5).

Summation of Journal Entries from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Neutral

Some teachers are good and some are bad.

My job is like an investigator.

Some of the other assistant principals are helpful – others are not.

My principal and I are still learning to trust each other.

Students are quite astute about the ways of their teachers.

Teachers' actions have a profound effect on students – both good and bad.

From the journal data, it appears that these first year assistant principals struggled the most with their general job responsibilities. All but one of them mentioned the challenge of successfully completing their responsibilities and assigned tasks while dealing with the moment to moment interruptions or crisis. Several were surprised by how little they knew about many of the job tasks, and others were uncomfortable with learning their job while on the job.

These first year assistant principals also felt challenged by the effect that their new job was having on their personal life. All of them mentioned that the job had affected them personally one way or another. Unfortunately more discussed the negative impact of their job on their family, physical health, social life, and own mental well being.

Another surprising transition for them was leading adults. Many were shocked by the behavior of teachers. Some commented on how self-centered teachers could be and that the teachers often did not understand the big picture of the school operation.

The group of new assistant principals seemed to be affected, but in a lesser way by the physical transition of their new role, the emotional issues, and dealing with parents on a larger scale. Their insights about their principals gave mixed reactions – it depended on their principal. Some spoke glowingly of their relationship with their mentor, while others seemed disgusted by the lack of support.

It was interesting to note that the new assistant principals had little to say about dealing with students and their new comrades, other assistant principals. Possibly these two groups were not on the minds of the new assistant principals as much as other groups such as teachers and parents.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The journal topics were used to spur discussion in small groups of four or five participants. The groups were self-selected by the participants. Group ideas were recorded on chart paper.

The chart papers from the small group discussions were analyzed by rephrasing their comments into short sentences or clusters and then these clusters were organized into categories with labels. When more than one group said basically the same thing, a number in parenthesis follows the statement. Complete small group data is given below. It is described in terms of challenges, positives, and neutrals as described by the participants.

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

The thing that has surprised me most thus far...

Challenges:

Transition
lack of orientation to the building

Job Responsibilities
not being able to finish tasks during the day/a feeling of not being organized (3 groups)
had no idea what went on behind the scenes (2 groups)
expect the unexpected and unique situations (2 groups)
interruptions
master schedule and room assignments – challenging
district policy is a deterrent
shortage of equipment
long hours
seems like you have more power as a teacher

many facets of the job

Staff
lack of staff cooperation/lack of teamwork among faculty groups
apathy among staff
colleagues don't see big picture
petty issues

Students
students already involved in fights
competence of student liars

Parents
irrational parents

Principal
lack of policies and procedures in place

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

The thing that has surprised me most thus far…

Positives:

Transition
positive experiences – welcomed to the school
staff and students were cooperative and receptive to new ap

Job Responsibilities
less stress than expected
time goes by quickly

Staff
cohesive faculty

Students
how easily students will follow rules when clear

Principal
perfect principal –things fall into place

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

The most challenging thing about being an assistant principal…

Challenges

Job Responsibilities
completing daily tasks with limited time (3 groups)
definition of role/job description
taking on new duties without training
not having control of our daily schedule
time demands of new tasks
lack of district support/red tape
filling open positions
customers going through correct channels
emotional teflon
equity in the division of labor
cafeteria duty

Personal Life
balancing personal and professional life

Staff
teacher perception of the job
apathetic teachers
too many silly discipline referrals
dealing with complaints against teachers
teachers who are vindictive against students

Students
special education students and requirements for discipline (2)
dealing with SES differences in students from north county to south county and vice-versa
addressing minor issues brought to us by students (especially middle school)

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Describe how your perception of teachers has changed now that you are in an administrative role.

Challenges:

Staff
teachers see themselves as center – we see big picture (3 groups)
lack of withitness and classroom management (2 groups)
now the teacher's behavior affects our schedule
awareness of teacher talk and how it affects the kids
some are disgruntled and hold grudges
some have a fear of change
negative attitudes seems to have a greater impact
want to support teachers but very difficult in some cases
petty referrals by teachers to get rid of kids
they are not our peers anymore
demanding

Positives:

Staff
we appreciate good teachers more
impressed by teachers willingness to ask for help
most are still hard working
empowered – taking on leadership roles

Neutral:

Staff
Our perceptions remained the same.

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Describe how your perception of parents has changed now that you are in an administrative role.

Challenges:

Parents
Greater volume of people (2 groups)
Protect at any cost – like entering a mother bear's den (2 groups)
Can be enabling (2 groups)
We are more of a mediator now.
Get all sides of the story before talking.
ESE parents have lots of say so.
Seems like parents expect the school to do everything including raising their kid.
Parents allow their child to manipulate them.

Positives:

Parents
Parents listen better.
Lots of parents are supportive.
If you listen to them, good customer service pays off.

Neutral

Parents
Our perception has not changed.

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

How has my new job affected my personal life?

Challenges:

Personal Life – family
Less time with family (3 groups)
Difficult to maintain balance (2 groups)
Much is required – more time at school (2 groups)

Personal Life – self
More time thinking about work when away from work.

Personal Life – home
Less time to do personal things like grocery store

Personal Life – health
Can't exercise anymore
Altered scheduled – sleep
Don't sleep as well

Personal Life - social
Can't see old friends
Careful of where I go and what I do

Positives:

Personal Life - family
Interpersonal skills learned at work can be used at home
More quality time with spouse on weekend

Personal Life – home
More organized at home (4 groups)
Increase in pay
Make free time quality time/appreciate down time

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

Describe your relationship with your principal.

Challenges:

Principal
invisible
feeling of alienation
lack of consistency
lack of support

Positives

Principal
role model (5 groups)
supportive (4 groups)
patient (3 groups)
friendship (3 groups)
resource (2 groups)
good communication (2 groups)
trustworthy – straight forward (2 groups)
mutual sense of humor (2 groups)
sees big picture
allows autonomy
focuses on my strengths
does not micro manage

Neutral:

My principal is a female.

Summation of Small Group Discussions from New Assistant Principal Cadre

How has my perception of the role of assistant principal changed?

Challenges:

Job Responsibilities
many hats feel like a juggling clown (3 groups)
be all things to all people (3 groups)
ap roles can vary greatly from school to school (2 groups)
not the pay raise that we expected (2 groups)
need lots of patience (2 groups)
time to do quality things like curriculum
deadlines – need more turnaround time
intensity and frequency of extra duties
too much time spent of menial activities
are bound by the bells
amount of paperwork
don't really have the power to enact change
non instructional personnel
no planning time
no lunch time
need lots of energy

Staff
babysitting members of the staff who are in drop

Parents
frequency of hostile parents (2 groups)

There were some similarities in the data between the individual journal entries and the small group discussions. Findings from both sources indicate that the new assistant principals were most challenged by their job responsibilities. Specifically they struggled with not being able to finish tasks during the day, juggling many tasks at one time, being all things to all people, and needing much patience to get through their busy days.

The new challenge of leading adults was mentioned in their journals as well as in the small group discussions. New assistant principáls in the small group discussions spoke of teachers who did not see or understand the big picture and of teachers who lacked "withitness" and classroom management skills.

In talking about their personal lives and the effect of their new job, assistant principals expressed concerns in both the journals and small group discussions. New assistant principals found it difficult to maintain the balance of home and work when more time was required at school. On the other hand, the assistant principals had more positive things to say in the small group discussions about the effect of their job on their personal lives; specifically many of the groups mentioned that they had become more organized at home as a result of their new job.

Parents were discussed more in the small groups than in the journals. New assistant principals in their discussions said that they had to deal with a greater volume of parents, that parents tended to protect their children at any cost, that parents can enable their children, and that the frequency of hostile parents was stressful.

Students were mentioned a little more in the small group discussions. New assistant principals mainly spoke about discipline issues and expressed difficulty in dealing with

some of the rules and regulations pertaining to special education students with disciplinary problems..

Principals were complemented more in the small group discussions, and there were less complaints. Possibly new assistant principals were worried about confidentiality and wondered if what they were saying would make it back to their school.

Conclusions

The implementation of the professional development cadre for new assistant principals impacted the socio-emotional transition of these first year assistant principals by providing a structured time for them to talk to one another and by giving them the opportunity to reflect individually in journals. On the Workshop Customer Satisfaction Survey, the new assistant principals stated that these were some of the strongest features of the cadre.

Journal writing and small group discussions provided new assistant principals with the opportunity to vent, to problem solve, and to get varying perspectives. The researcher is confident that the participants discovered their own feelings in regards to heavy job responsibilities, the impact on their personal lives, and the transition of dealing with adults, specifically difficult staff.

It is interesting to note that the findings from this study support previous research in regards to problems faced by first year administrators. First year assistant principals in this project were surprised by how little they knew about their job and how it made them uncomfortable to learn on the job. This is similar to what Michel found in his 1996 study.

Similar to Hartzell's work in 1994, first year assistant principals in this study described the difficulty of working with staff in their new role, resolving conflict, and learning how to work with their principal. Also both this study and Hartzell's found that defining their own role – figuring out their job responsibilities was challenging.

Considering how busy their lives had become, the cadre was probably the only consistent way that these new assistant principals had to bond with other assistant principals. The researcher speculates that the bonds formed will last through their administrative careers.

In replicating this study, the author would ask participants to describe how they feel the cadre impacted their socio-emotional transition specifically. Also it would be helpful to ask the participants for feedback in regards to the journal topics. Furthermore, it would be interesting to study the bonds among assistant principals that were developed through this cadre longitudinally.

The implementation of the professional development cadre for new assistant principals impacted the skills of these first year assistant principals. Across participants, the pre and post test measures on the Pinellas County Schools Assistant Principal Performance Appraisal showed positive change towards improvements in skills on all seven areas of the evaluation. Although the results were favorable across participants, the results did not produce a pattern across skill areas for each participant. One cannot be sure what to attribute this to – the cadre, the individual, the mentor, the on the job training, other training, or chance. In replicating this study, the researcher would ask the participants to describe what impacted their skills.

The strongest pieces of evidence about the effect of the cadre on the skills of the assistant principals come from two sources. The first source is the Workshop Customer Satisfaction Survey. Approximately 90% of the assistant principals stated that the professional development presentations built their skills. Second is the data from the Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Survey. Of the ten areas on the survey that correlated to the professional development presentations, eight of the areas showed change in a positive direction in regards to learning.

In replicating this study, the author would modify the professional development presentations on Technology and School Improvement Planning (the two weak areas) to see what effect this had on the scores. It might also be interesting to change the scale of Self Assessment Assistant Principal Knowledge and Skills Survey from five options to three.

This study echoes three recommendations of previous studies. Similar to works by Michel (1996), Hartzell (1994), Educational Research Service (1999), Marnik (1997), Regules (1997), and Goodson (2000), the author feels that new administrators need regularly scheduled time to talk with other administrators, especially their peers. Workshops that provide knowledge relevant to their new job are critical. Last, new administrators often have little down time so being given an opportunity to reflect is a luxury.

A professional development cadre is one feasible way to meet the needs of new administrators. It works best when the cadre is built upon those very needs and is further refined by the input of a wide variety of sources within the school district. A new training program such as a professional development cadre needs the support of the

superintendent and assistant superintendents as well as principals. Cadre participants need an organized leader who manages processes well and yet is personable enough to be seen as a mentor. Professional development presentations to the cadre must be relevant, effective, and interesting. Time must be provided for peer interaction and individual reflection. Last, feedback should be gathered from the participants so that the professional development cadre program is modified and made better each year.

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